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Transportation and Communications
Brief ...



ON TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

SUBMITTED BY THE FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

JUNE 26, 1980

In October, 1962, a fully-loaded runaway gasoline tanker careened into the town of Peace River, Alberta. It tipped, exploded and flattened a whole block. In February, 1965, a tanker truck carrying 30,000 litres of liquid propane exploded, demolishing eighteen buildings and incinerating the main street of Aylmer, Ontario. In April, 1975, fourteen hundred kilograms of explosives were accidentally detonated in a Calgary dynamite plant. Six men were killed. In November, 1979, leaking chlorine from a derailed tanker car forced nearly a quarter of a million residents of Mississauga to leave their homes. Every year, thousands of accidents involving humans and hazardous goods occur. Fortunately, most are less dramatic than those cited above. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is convinced, and seriously concerned, that Canadians must inevitably expect more such accidents as the list of known hazardous goods grows longer. Already, that list includes 300,000 items. Chemists are adding to it daily to meet demands from consumers and industry. Every Canadian community is becoming increasingly dependent on a variety of hazardous products. Both gasoline and natural gas, for example, are virtually indispensable.

While municipal and safety officials in Mississauga have rightly been commended for the efficiency with which their city was evacuated, we believe, along with most Canadian local government officials, that this country's municipalities are largely ill-informed and unprepared to cope with accidents resulting from the transportation of hazardous goods.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities represents approximately forty-five per cent of the Canadian population, and is thus a powerful instrument for informing and assisting local governments. In September, 1979, the Federation's Executive Committee

decided that a workshop on the transportation of dangerous goods would be a key element of our 43rd Annual Conference which was held in Halifax earlier this month. This decision, which predated the Mississauga accident, reflected the Federation's long-held conviction that there is an urgent requirement to promote public safety in this sphere.

Accordingly, we welcome the introduction of Bill C-18 and its accompanying regulations as instrumental steps in guaranteeing improved safety for Canadians and their communities. We trust that the Bill's enactment will inaugurate the adoption of uniform safety standards and procedures for all modes of transport throughout our country. We support the replacement of previous overlapping statutes and authorities which, in the past, have inevitably complicated regulation of the carriage of dangerous goods.

We have observed that Bill C-18 will constitute a much-needed intervention in a difficult area of impinging jurisdictions. The Federation is pleased to note that the Act and regulations are being developed as distinct instruments which will facilitate the provinces' implementation of their requirements in cooperation with federal administrative procedures.

Certainly federal, provincial, and municipal governments will need to make complicated arrangements--individually and collectively--to administer, enforce and fund this safety system.

The Federation acknowledges the urgent necessity for all Canadian communities to formulate individual contingency plans to

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raise their levels of preparedness to cope with the variety of consequences which an accident resulting from the transportation of dangerous goods in their municipality could cause.

Naturally, the effect of an explosion, a fire or a spill in a municipality depends where it occurs. Different routes should be designated for different types of hazardous goods, according to the particular danger they pose. Where there is a danger of fire or explosion, goods should be routed away from heavily-populated areas. If water contamination is a risk, routes should avoid water supply points. In all instances, routes should be as far as possible from hospitals.

While the Federation of Canadian Municipalities supports in principle the Bill's provisions for remedial action by inspectors and others whenever a future accident involving dangerous goods occurs, we are primarily concerned with measures designed to prevent, or at least to reduce the incidence of, such occurrences.

To this end, municipalities have a major role to play in ensuring that, in the future, dangerous goods in transit will bypass densely populated areas. Communities will need to devise new truck routes which, while avoiding the carriage of the hazardous products through residential areas, will guarantee continued efficient service in industrial districts.

Criteria will be required to enable municipalities to select appropriate truck routes for the carriage of dangerous goods,

and for scheduling their use. We sincerely hope that passage of Bill C-18 and its regulations will result in the subsequent conduct of a comprehensive survey, the results of which will assist municipalities in making these decisions.

Some provincial Municipal Acts may provide sufficient authority for communities to adopt dangerous goods routeing by-laws. Alternatively, some individual municipalities have acquired the necessary authority by having their provincial legislatures enact city-specific dangerous goods acts. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities would be pleased to cooperate with its affiliate members, the provincial municipal associations of Canada, to explore the possibility of other municipalities obtaining individual legislative authorization of their hazardous goods transportation plans. Uniformity in the implementation of dangerous products legislation throughout Canada's provinces and territories is essential; perhaps the Federation can play a useful role in helping to bring it about.

Besides new truck routes, ensuring the safety of Canadian communities will necessitate the accordence of federal government priority to railway relocation programs. City-centre rail cargo routes are now characteristic of many Canadian communities and, as the Federation has previously observed, they pose a constant serious threat to the safety of citizens and of property.

Members of this Committee may be interested to learn that, at the Federation's recent conference workshop session on the transportation, storage and disposal of dangerous goods, a number of resolutions were received and forwarded to the FCM's incoming National Board of Directors.

The salient points of these resolutions, which the National Board of Directors will consider at a meeting on September 5, 1980, in Montreal, are:

- a) the Federation of Canadian Municipalities should establish a national municipal commission on the transportation of dangerous goods.
- b) the Federation should again urge the federal government to amend the Railway Act to require that railways share information about potentially hazardous cargoes in transit or in storage with municipal authorities.
- c) the Federation should endorse a request for a comprehensive review by federal and provincial governments of legislation pertaining to all aspects of the transportation of dangerous goods by rail, air, sea and road.
- d) the Federation should urge the federal government to institute a national program for removal of rail trackage that carries, or may carry, hazardous material through highly populated areas.
- e) the Federation should petition the federal government to upgrade to internationally acceptable standards road beds of mainline trackage, switching yards and spurs which carry explosives or toxic materials. All containers used to transport explosive or toxic materials to be marked in accordance with a uniform code.

We will advise the federal government of the National Board of Directors' decisions about those resolutions.

In conclusion, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities supports Bill C-18 in principle, recognises the tri-level government action which its implementation will necessitate, and pledges its members' cooperation and assistance in all measures directed to reducing the risks entailed by the transportation of dangerous goods.

June 26, 1980
Federation of Canadian Municipalities



